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File

10 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Chronology of Events on Desota Patrol and Incidents Involving the Maddox and Turney Joy

Attached is a memorandum for record developed by Colonel Steakley's people, pulling together the timing of 34A actions and the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin

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Authority NSA ltr. 3-5-76
By RRW, NARS, Date 4-20-76

W. Y. SMITH

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[illegible]) 10 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Chronology of Events Relating to DESOTO Patrol Incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin on 2 and 4 August 1964

Background - By CINCPAC's message 152123Z July, approval was requested to conduct a DESOTO Patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin during the period 31 July through 8 August. The last patrol into the area was made by the USS CRAIG (DD 885) during the period 28 February thru 10 March 1964. Limitations on the closest points of approach (CPA) for the USS CRAIG included:

a. North Vietnamese (DRV) Coast 4 NM,

b. Chinese Communist (CHICOM) mainland 15NM, and

c. CHICOM off-shore islands 12NM.

- CINCPAC requested that the July - August patrol with the USS Maddox be cleared for CPA's as follows:

a. North Vietnamese Coast 8 NM,

b. North Vietnamese Islands, 4 NM, and

c. CHICOM Coast 15NM.

- DRV and CHICOM reaction to the CRAIG patrol, noted below, had been quite limited:

a. On 28 February, a Kronstadt - class patrol craft intercepted and paced the CRAIG for a short period;

b. On 29 February, one unidentified aircraft remained 36 miles from the CRAIG for about two hours,

d. On 2 March, Peking issued 280th serious warning.

- CINCPAC's 15 July proposal was approved as requested by the State Department, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Special Assistant to the President.

- First Incident (2 August)

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1607H the MADDOX reported being attacked by three North Vietnamese craft and that it was opening fire.

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- Second Incident (4 August)

That night the MADDOX joined by the USS TURNER JOY, reported surface and air contacts on their radar screens. The surface contacts were later identified as hostile, and at 2240H the MADDOX opened fire. Subsequent reports from the destroyers indicated that possibly two PT boats had been sunk.

b. Debriefing of the pilots, providing air coverage over the MADDOX and TURNER JOY, revealed that during the incident they observed gun flashes on the surface of the water and bursting light AA at their approximate flight altitude.

- In response to Joint Chiefs of Staff instructions, a modified DESOTO Patrol was resumed on 7 August and completed on 8 August. The northern point for this modified track was 1841N. No DRV hostile reaction to the patrol was indicated during 7 - 8 August period. CINCPAC was authorized to withdraw the destroyers from the area due to Typhoon "IDA", however he was able to complete the modified patrol on 8 August prior to withdrawing.

- CINCPAC, by his message 080155Z, requested permission to conduct another full scale DESOTO Patrol into the Gulf of Tonkin during the period 12 - 17 August.

situation summaries from the surface and air units involved, verifies that the two incidents not only took

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place but the attacks were instigated by the DRV using Swatows and motor torpedo boats.

- Examination of tracks of the MADDOX/TURNER JOY and the units of OPLAN 34A indicates that there was no mutual interference. Additionally, the MADDOX/TURNER JOY were not in the 34A operations area when the two ships were attacked.

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Ralph D. Steakley
RALPH D. STEAKLEY
Colonel, USAF
Chief, Joint Reconnaissance Center
Operations Directorate

4 Attachments
1. Chronology of Events Derived from message traffic
2. Chart showing first incident
3. Chart showing second incident
4. Chart showing MADDOX/TURNER JOY tracks

Prepared by:

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Joint Reconnaissance Center, J-3
Extension: OX 5-7356

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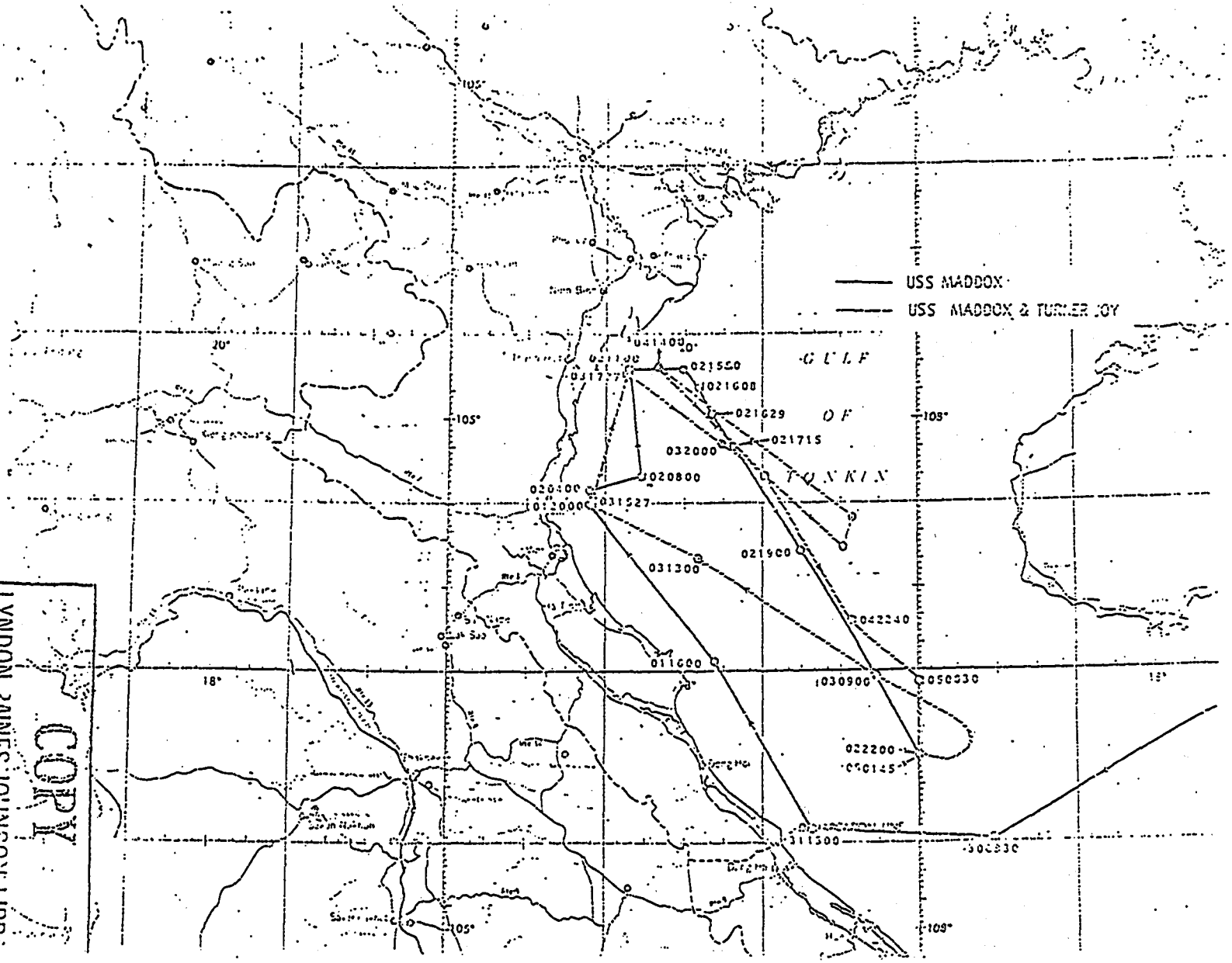

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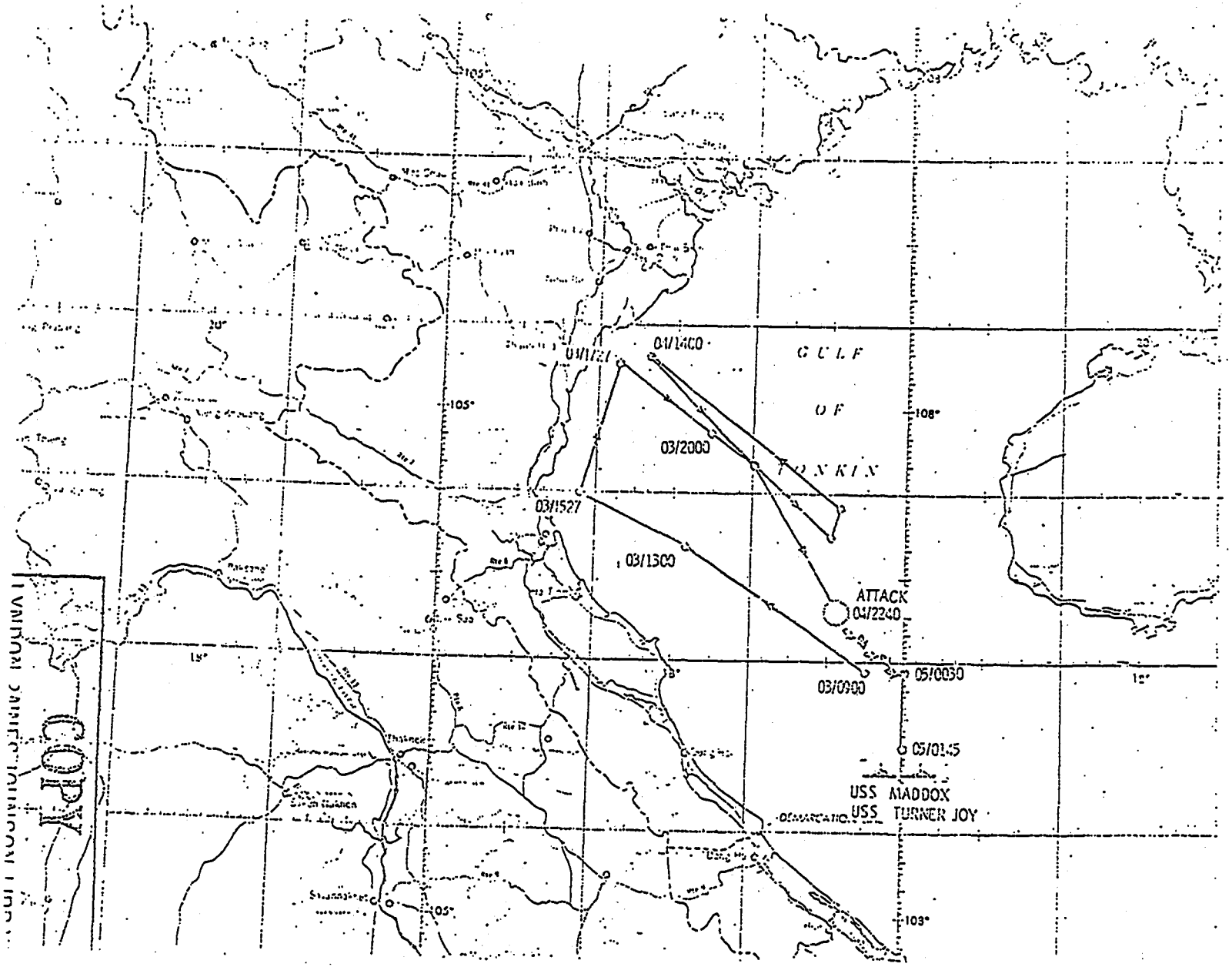

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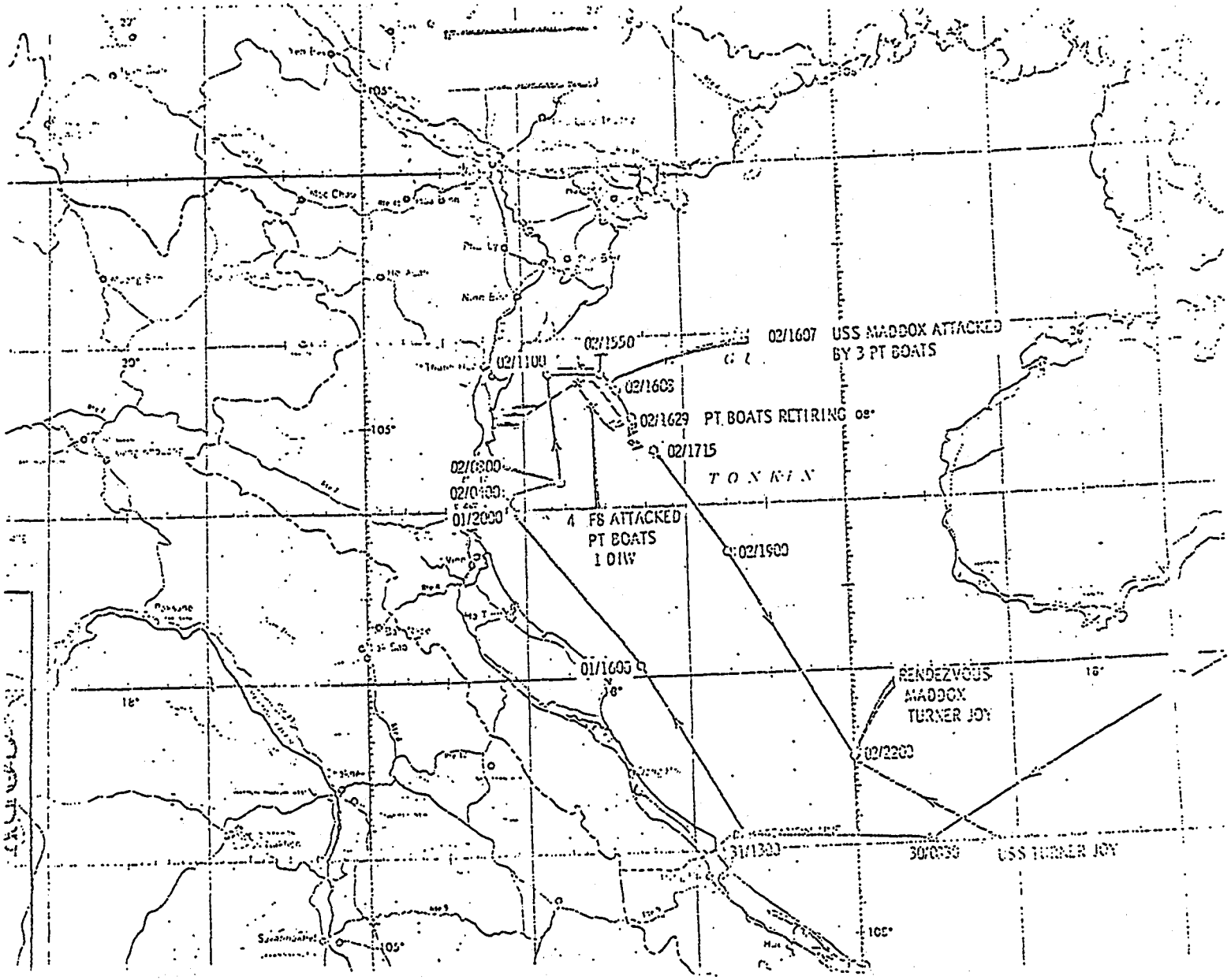
02/1550
02/1607 USS MADDOX ATTACKED BY 3 PT BOATS
02/1100
02/1603
02/1629 PT BOATS RETIRING
02/1715
TONKIN
02/0800
02/0400
01/2000
4 F8 ATTACKED PT BOATS 1 DIW
02/1900
01/1600
RENDEZVOUS MADDOX TURNER JOY
02/2200
31/1300
30/0030
USS TURNER JOY

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ATTACHMENT 1

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

DATE/TIME (HOTEL)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
28 July	USS MADDOX		Departed Keelung, Taiwan
300830	MADDOX	17-01N 108-29E	Sighted 2 PT type craft that passed ahead southerly heading "NASTY CLAS Two more sighted 15 min later one "same class" other appeared to be Soviet "P-6 class". CPA 3 miles.
301405	PTFs 2,3,5,6 (These are South Vietnamese Sea forces)	Underway DANANG	
301440	PTFs 2,3,5,6	16-20N 108-20E	
301610	PTFs 2,3,5,6	17-00N 108-20E	
302110	PTFs 2,3,5,6	18-40 107-10	
302315	PTFs 2,3,5,6	19-00 106-16	PTF 2 and 5 then proceeded direct to HON NIEU. PTFs 3 and 6 direct to HON ME.
310002	PTF 3,6	HON ME	PTFs commenced bombardment HON ME.
310037	PTFs 2,5	HON NIEU	PTFs commenced bombardment HON NIEU.
310048	PTFs 3,6	HON ME	PTFs departed from area
310110	PTFs 2,5	HON NIEU	PTFs departed from area
-	PTF 2,5	-	Returned to base along same route as approach
-	PTFs 3,6	-	Returned to base via 19-00N, 106-16E thence direct to Danang
310730	PTF 2	-	Suffered an engine casualty.
310955	PTF 6	DANANG	Arrived at base
311045	PTF 5	DANANG	Arrived at base
311055	PTF 3	DANANG	~~Arrived at base~~
311120	PTF 2	DANANG	Arrived ~~at base~~
311300	MADDOX	17-05N 107-18E	~~Arrived at PT ALPHA Sighted 20 junks apparently fishing.~~

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DATE/TIME (HOTEL)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
011600	MADDOX	18-04.9N 106-41.8E	
012000	MADDOX	19-00N 105-54.3E	110 junks fishing craft sighted. USS MADDOX sent: "Contemplate serious reaction my movements in vicinity Pt. Charlie in near future. Received information indicating possible hostile actions".

DATE/TIME	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
020400	MADDOX	19-06.1N 105-54E	
020448	MADDOX		MADDOX sent: "Have terminated orbit. Proceeding due East from Pt. "C" at ten knots until daylight. Heavy concentration of junks to North".
020645	MADDOX		MADDOX reported: "Conditions unchanged. Unless otherwise directed am proceeding to Pt. DELTA.
021100	MADDOX	19-47N 106-08E	"Sighted approximately 75 junks. Will deviate from track as necessary to avoid passing through."
021230	MADDOX		MADDOX reported "sighted 3 PT craft 10 miles North of HON ME Island on a Southerly heading - - speed 20K. CPA 7NM. Evaluated as P-4s."

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DATE/TIME (GMT)	SHIPS/PTN	POSITION	REMARKS
021315	MADDOX		MADDOX reported: "Sighting 2 pons. Swatow about North of HON NE on Southerly heading. Speed 30. All appeared to be heading for vicinity of HON I

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021540	MADDOX		MADDOX" "I am being approached by Hi speed craft with apparent intention of torpedo attack. I intend to open fire if necessary in self defense".
021550	MADDOX	19-47N 106-31.1E	From MADDOX: "3 torpedo boats nearing on bearing 268° range 11.5 NM closi at 50 Kts."
021607	MADDOX		MADDOX: "Being attacked by 3 DRV PT craft. I am opening fire with 5 inch battery. Air support fr TICO ETA 15 minutes."
021608	MADDOX	19-41.5N 106-35.6E	PT boats closed to 9000 yards, MADDOX turned to course 150° and fired 3 warning shots with 5" guns. Speed 27 knots. Torpedo boats continued to close, taken under continuous fire. Although receiving numer ous hits and near misses ~~2 boats closed to about 5000 yards, and because of volume of gun fire made an ineffective laun of 2 torpedoes. MADDOX turned away and torpedoes passed on starboard side~~ from aft to forward.

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DATE/TIME (GMT)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
021608 (Cont'd)			Machine gun fire from PT resulted in one hit. After boats turned away MADDOX turned to pursue until TICO aircraft arrived. MADDOX directed aircraft to attack.
021608	MADDOX		Message from CTG 77.5 to COMTHFLT said: "1. MADDOX 25X claims being pursued by 3 high speed 45Kt surface craft
			2. Orig providing 4 F-8E cover armed with Zuni and ammo.
			3. Instructed not to open fire unless MADDOX or aircraft fired upon."
021621	MADDOX		Third torpedo boat had pulled almost abeam, and at time of receiving direct hit, dropped torpedo in water. Was not observed to run (ton
021629	MADDOX		From MADDOX: "PT craft completed torpedo attack and retired. Ship sustained no damage. Ships guns damaged one. Aircraft from TICO now attacking one craft. I am retiring to the Southeast".
021630	MADDOX		4 F-8s arrived over MADD and on request by MADDOX attacked 3 motor PT boat Boats proceeding away at high speed in Northerly direction. 2 PT boats were approximately 10 miles North of MADDOX and 1 about 15 miles. ~~The first F-8s attacked the Northerly pair of PTs with 2 Zuns. No hits on the first run. One aircraft reported hit but still in control, was told to orbit MADDOX.~~

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DATE/TIME (GMT)	SHIPS/TTP	POSITION	REMARKS
021630 (Cont'd)			Another Zuni run and 4 strafing attacks were made. Zuni did not hit target but hits were observed in the strafing runs. 2 PTs not observed to slow down. Second 2 F-8s attacked Southerly single PT boat. Rockets were expended on first run but no hits observed. Each aircraft made two strafing runs, one aircraft against the Northerly pair. Hits were observed on all strafing runs and single PT boat was reported dead in water and burning near stern.
021641	MADDOX		MADDOX sent: "PT craft completed torpedo attack and retired. Ship sustained no damage. Ships guns damaged one. Aircraft from TICO now attacking 1 craft. I am retiring to Southeast".
021659			COM7THFLT sent: "To MADDOX: Retire from area until situation clears and further advised. Do not pursue attacking craft. Fire as necessary in self defense. Report situation".
021707			COM7THFLT to TICO: "Direct your NN picket (TURNER JOY) to close MADDOX best speed. ~~Give MADDOX all practicable air support, while maintaining own RAW posture~~".

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DATE/TIME (GMT)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
021715	MADDOX	1921.5N 10646E	MADDOX retiring at best speed to rendezvous with TURNER JOY thence TIGO. Anticipate rendezvous approximately 022000H.

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031527	MADDOX	19-00N 10553E	MADDOX reports: "Air radar now operative.
031610	PTFs 1,5	DANANG	Underway from base.
031616	PTFs 2,6	DANANG	Underway from base.
031645	PTFs 1,2,5,6	1620N 10820E	All PTFs in company.
031727	MADDOX	1947N 10608E	MADDOX reports: "No DRV military craft sighted. CTG 77.5 provided continuous air support throughout patro
031845	PTFs 1,2,5,6	1700N 10820E	PTF 2 engine casualty, commenced return to base.

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DATE/TIME (HOTEL)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
032000	MADDOX	1921.2N 10647.9E	MADDOX sends: "I intend to proceed Southeast to 1842N 10730E thence North to position 1853N 10733E thence West to Point DEL arriving and commencing line patrol to Point CHARLIE at 041300."
032110	PTF 2	DANANG	Returned to base.
032222	PTFs 1,5,6	1758N 10711E	PTFs commenced independent approach to targets.
032320	MADDOX	1845N 10716E	MADDOX reports: "Held surface contact 012T range 38.5 miles. Contact has paralleled my movement including ZIG ZAG for past hour. Strongly suspect shadow by block patrol/PT craft."
032352	PTF 6	1752N 10627E	Commenced fire on military complex located at South bank of RON River.
032400	PTF 1	1757.30N 10630.20E	Commenced fire on VINH SON radar site.
032400	PTF 5	1758.00N 10630.00E	Commenced fire on VINH SON radar site.
040002	PTF 6	-	Ceased fire and departed from area.
040020	PTF 6	-	Pursued by enemy craft.
040025	PTFs 1,5	-	Ceased fire, departed from area, and commenced return to base along approach route.
040100	PTF 6	-	Outdistanced pursuing craft and commenced return to base along approach route.
040625	PTF 6	DANANG	Arrived at base.
040650	PTF 5	DANANG	Arrived at base.
040715	PTF 1	DANANG	Arrived at base.
041300	MADDOX	-	MADDOX sends: "Visibility [illegible] commenced patrol to Pt. CHARLIE. Will remain North of 1910N per ref. A. I

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DATE/TIME (GMT)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
041300 (Cont'd)			Inbound withdraw to East at 041730. Air support in the area. No significant sighting/detection Suspect shadow continued South after my turn North at 040100. Last contact at 040400 range 78 miles
041400	MADDOX	1947N 10619E	MADDOX sends: "Vicinity of Pt. DELTA patrolling to 1910N. Suspect shadow 15 miles to the East. Contact has paralleled my movements for th past four hours. Unable to have continuous overhead low CAP from the TICO due to distance."

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DATE/TIME (HOTEL)	SHIPS/TTF	POSITION	REMARKS
042040	MADDOX	1910.7N 10700E	From MADDOX: "Received information indicating attack by PGM/P-4. [illegible] Proceeding Southeast at best speed".
042049			7THFLT sent to MADDOX: "At first light 5 Aug proceed to intercept original track between Pt. CHARLIE and DELTA at 1910N. Remain on this track during daylight hours. Further instructions to follow".
042136			TICO reports: "MADDOX reports two unidentified surface vessels (Skunks) and three unidentified aircraft (Bogies)."
042208			MADDOX reports: "Unidentified aircraft disappeared from radar screen. Unidentified surface contacts not closing this time, maintaining distance of 27 miles.
042234			TICO reports: "Two original Skunks opened to 40 miles. Three new Skunks contacted at 13 miles. Closed to 11 miles evaluated as hostile. CAP/STRIKE/PHOTO overhead under control of MADDOX."
042240	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Commenced firing on closing PTF boats."

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DATE/TIME (HOTEL)	SHIPS/PTF	POSITION	REMARKS
042248	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Two Skunks on beam closed to 10 miles, 2 South at 40 miles closing at relative speed of 70 knots."
042252	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Am und continuous torpedo atta
042315	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "Have thus far successfully avoided at least six torpedoes. Small craft continuing attacks. Believe one sunk by TURNER JOY. At least two remain".
042340	MADDOX		MADDOX reports: "PT fro West continued attacking run. MADDOX opened fire. PT launched torpedo".
042350	MADDOX	1817N 10732E	MADDOX reports: "Am under attack again."

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